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MEMORANDUM

Selected Areas and Situations That Foreign
Leaders Might Use to Test the New
US PresidentUSSR

Soviet policy in the first few months of the new administration will probably reflect a cautious and hopeful attitude; the Soviet leaders seem likely to wish to avoid provocative actions that would cause a deterioration in bilateral relations and prejudice negotiations which they hope may now move forward. In another sense, however, it is clear that they have already begun to test the new US leadership. Brezhnev and his colleagues have started to probe and weigh the implications of policy pronouncements by the incoming administration on questions such as SALT and related issues. This ongoing assessment of US policy and intentions will almost certainly produce numerous diplomatic exchanges and informal explorations in which the Soviets will attempt not only to discover and understand what US policy will be but also to influence as much as possible the direction of that policy. As part of this effort, the Soviets may propose an early summit meeting between Brezhnev and the new President.

Specifically, Brezhnev is likely to do three things which may require President Carter to respond and which may significantly affect the Soviet appraisal of the new President:

--He may push for an early response to Soviet negotiatory proposals now on the table, including Soviet SALT proposals and MBFR proposals. (This would be consistent with Soviet behavior at the time Nixon first became President.)

--He may use soundings not only to try to clarify Mr. Carter's position on various issues, but to put him on the defensive. Such issues

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include unfulfilled undertakings of the previous administration as well as issues that may affect current Soviet policy deliberations. (An example of the latter might be Carter's attitude toward present difficulties in Eastern Europe: Will the US try to capitalize on the economic and political difficulties in Eastern Europe in order to strengthen US influence in the area? Also, would such influence be employed in opposition to Soviet interests in the area?) In any event, initial presidential appointments will be closely examined by Brezhnev for indications of what President Carter's foreign policies toward Eastern Europe will be.

--Brezhnev may be tempted to exploit opportunities arising independently of Soviet action, with the consequence that President Carter will thereby reveal something of his political character as it will be reflected in his conduct of policy toward the USSR.

Thus, while an overt Soviet move intended to test the limits of US forbearance appears improbable, it is nevertheless conceivable that tensions between the US and USSR could increase suddenly because of a conscious Soviet policy decision. While it is not likely, it is imaginable that the Soviet government could create a crisis on issues that are now dormant, the most obvious being a new threat to Berlin or a renewed effort to create strategic submarine bases in Cuba. It is somewhat more likely that Soviet-US tensions could rise as a result of a mere continuation of certain Soviet long-term policies which contain ongoing irritants to Soviet-US relations. Soviet-Cuban actions in Southern Africa or Soviet behavior in the Middle East stand out in this regard. Finally, certain developments outside of Soviet control, such as a succession crisis in Yugoslavia following Tito's death or riots in Poland which local forces are unable to manage, would present the new administration and the USSR with a very sensitive and delicate situation.

In sum, while the Soviet Union will probably seek to follow a prudent course in dealing with the new administration over the near term, various developments both within and beyond Soviet control could produce a more forward and pressing line of Soviet policy. The assessments that follow encompass

both contingencies which we believe could arise and those which, though they are thought unlikely to arise, nonetheless seem to deserve consideration.

Eastern Europe: This is a prime example of an area in which a situation that could serve as an unintended test of relations between Moscow and the new administration could easily arise. The area is troubled by a malaise stemming from economic slowdowns, chronic shortages, consumer discontents, and simmering national resentments. The situation is worse in Poland, where the regime's efforts to deal with its economic problems through price hikes have been frustrated by the violent opposition of industrial workers, and its efforts to deal with its workers through a combination of coercion and conciliation have succeeded only in bringing Poland's restive intellectuals and the powerful Roman Catholic hierarchy out against it. The atmosphere is also troubled in neighboring East Germany, where the regime's crackdown on its dissident intellectuals has provoked unrest.

If disorders were to erupt in Poland or elsewhere in Eastern Europe, the Soviets would go a considerable distance to avoid a direct role in their suppression. They would greatly prefer to leave that task to the local authorities, and probably would support economic concessions in the interests of restoring order (they have already extended large credits to Warsaw). If the local authorities should prove incapable of restoring order, however, there is little reason to doubt that the Soviets will exert whatever degree of force is necessary to restore the situation.

Yugoslavia: Major tests of US resolve centering on Yugoslavia are unlikely to be offered by the USSR before Tito's departure or before the CSCE follow-up conference in Belgrade next spring. Even after these events, barring a major deterioration on the domestic scene to stimulate Soviet meddling, any tests are likely to be more subtle and indirect in Yugoslavia than in many other areas. Yugoslavia's unique position in Eastern Europe--outside of the Warsaw Pact and CEMA and inside the leadership of the nonaligned movement--provides it with considerable protection from overt demands as long as Soviet foreign policy remains committed to detente. Any test, therefore, is likely to come through a gradual escalation of pressure on the Yugoslavs to make certain limited concessions, which in turn could call for a counter signal demonstrating US concern.

In view of Yugoslavia's strategic location, such pressures are likely to include increased efforts to obtain expanded access to repair and provisioning facilities on the Adriatic for Soviet naval forces. The immediate Soviet aim is thus likely to be primarily one of modifying Yugoslav behavior in ways favorable to Soviet interests, and only secondarily of assessing how the US will respond.

Submarines In Cuba: A potentially serious crisis in Soviet-American relations could arise if the Soviets were to repeat a step they attempted in Cuba in the fall of 1970. At that time, such a base would have given the USSR substantial military-strategic benefits by allowing it to increase the number and the range of patrols of submarines in the Caribbean and the Atlantic. Beyond this, however, the Soviet action was a probe of US political resolve. In posing this challenge, the Kremlin deliberately seized on ambiguities in the 1962 Kennedy-Khrushchev agreement in which the Soviets had promised not to deploy offensive weapons in Cuba.

A crisis similar to that of 1970, when Moscow was induced to abandon plans for a permanent base for nuclear-powered, missile-firing submarines on the southern coast of Cuba at Cienfuegos, could recur on short notice if Moscow were to believe that a new administration might react differently, but in our judgment this is unlikely for several reasons: (a) While such a Cuban base would contribute to the Soviet strategic position, it is probably less important today for the USSR's underwater deterrent force, given the larger numbers of SSBNs and SLBMs and greater accuracy and range of such missiles. (b) The US firmly and explicitly interpreted the 1962 agreement to prohibit subs serviced "either in or from Cuba" and Moscow tacitly accepted this interpretation. A repeat performance would therefore now be doubly provocative. (c) The improved state of US-USSR relations since 1970 argues against Soviet probes of this gravity.

Korean Crisis: The Soviets are well aware that US troops would be immediately involved in any major renewal of hostilities in Korea, and this is probably the least likely area of Soviet provocation. The Soviets have made it clear in a number of private conversations that they accept the status quo in Korea and would expect any changes in the situation to benefit the Chinese. Moscow probably would

welcome any move Kim Il-song made in the direction of negotiations with the US and away from tension-building on the peninsula. The Russians have very little leverage on him, however, and any diplomatic initiative he may decide to take would be guided by his view of Pyongyang's interests. Relations are bad; the Russians criticize him

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and they have shown little desire to help him with his problem of international trade debts. If Kim were to resort to tension-building actions (such as increased agent-infiltration efforts along the demilitarized zone), Moscow undoubtedly would try to dissociate itself from these actions, fearful that Soviet-US relations would be harmed by any view in Washington of Soviet support for his actions.

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The Middle East: It appears quite unlikely that over the next few months the Soviets will take any direct unilateral military action against the US in the Middle East designed to test the new US administration. And they have little capacity to make indirect and subtle military probes, as their leverage over the nations of the region is limited. The area itself is nevertheless volatile, and it is conceivable that the Soviets would take advantage of existing tensions, such as problems on Lebanon's borders with Israel or a renewed threat of an Egyptian attack on Libya, to encourage militance on the part of its friends or to assume a threatening posture itself. Even were they inclined to do the former, however, their ability to influence the situation would be marginal. The most likely Soviet initiative would be diplomatic--perhaps yet another formal proposal for the convening of a Middle East peace conference in Geneva. Such a move would be designed to probe the new administration's readiness to engage in cooperative efforts with the USSR in the region and its willingness to put pressure on Israel.

Southern Africa: It is likely that Soviet intervention in three areas of southern Africa--Angola, Mozambique (and the Rhodesian insurgency), and Southwest Africa will increase in coming months, not in response to the change of administrations in the US, but as part of an ongoing drive to extend Soviet influence to these areas, and in accordance with the changing circumstances and opportunities which arise there.

[REDACTED]

While Cuba is escalating its support to Rhodesian and Southwest African guerrillas--in terms of training and the provision of equipment and advisers--it is very unlikely that Cuba will send combat troops to aid either group without Moscow's backing. Moscow probably considers Southwest Africa a lower priority target than Rhodesia; it is unlikely that any dramatic escalation of assistance to the Southwest African insurgency will take place in coming months.

Soviet policy toward the Rhodesian insurgency is less clear. The Cuban presence in Mozambique is growing, and the Soviets have stepped up their armaments assistance.

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it is now conceivable that Moscow may opt for a military solution in Rhodesia, by pressuring or encouraging black African participants in Geneva to make demands so great as to ensure rejection by the Smith government and failure of the talks.

On balance, however, it is unlikely that the Soviets would actively work to sabotage the negotiations, because:

--Moscow has seemingly been unable to decide which insurgent faction to back in Rhodesia.

--A much greater effort would be necessary to defeat the Rhodesian army than was required in Angola.

--Moscow is sensitive to African resentment of growing Soviet "hegemony" there.

--The Soviets may be wary that Cuban "adventurism" in Africa will get out of hand.

--The desire to outbid the Chinese in southern Africa once again may be partially offset by the desire to improve relations with the new post-Mao leadership.

--The Soviets would be reluctant to put further strain on the detente camel's back.

If negotiations break down for other reasons, however, the Soviets would be tempted to increase radically their involvement in the Rhodesian insurgency.

MBFR: Next to SALT, the MBFR negotiations in Vienna, which have dragged on for three years without significant results, offer a forum in which the Soviets may choose to test the negotiating mettle of the new administration. A new Soviet offer could be advertised as a litmus test of the sincerity of the new administration's interest in promoting military detente in Europe. The USSR could, for example, make some move in the direction of satisfying the West's interest in narrowing the numerical disparity between Warsaw Pact and NATO forces in the area of negotiations. Whatever the nature of such a Soviet proposal, it would be highly unlikely to offer more than the minimum necessary to attract the interest of the administration.

This might be accompanied by an attempt to deal with the MBFR problem on a bilateral basis, or possibly even at the summit level. Such a gambit would have the advantage of disrupting the Western negotiating front as well as serving as a gauge of the administration's interest in developing a "special" relationship with the Soviets.

Most Favored Nation: In an attempt to test the intentions of the Carter administration the USSR may renew its efforts to gain most favored nation (MFN) status. Such a move would be comparatively free of risk and, if successful, result in important economic gains. In addition, it would, from the Soviet perspective, be a tacit admission by the US of the growing international importance of the Soviet Union and the wisdom of a continued policy of detente. Nevertheless, the Soviet leadership does not, as the events of 1974 revealed, see victory on this front as essential to Soviet interests. Thus the USSR could save face by again terminating negotiations if they took a bad turn.

In any new diplomatic forays, the Soviets would try to separate the MFN question from what they consider extraneous issues such as trade credits and Jewish emigration. Mindful

of the results of past efforts, the Soviet leadership would pay close attention to both the Congress and the President, and see MFN negotiations as a test of the new administration's interest in improved relations and of the new President's ability to influence Congress.

SALT: There are two areas in the SALT arena where the USSR might test President-elect Carter in a more general sense soon after he takes office. These are:

--A concerted effort to conclude a SALT II agreement based on the Vladivostok Accord of November 1974.

--An attempt to resolve the two remaining SALT compliance issues in the Standing Consultative Commission--Soviet silo-type launch control facilities and the US practice of placing large shelters over Minuteman silos in conjunction with a hardening program.

Early Conclusion of a SALT-II Agreement: It is already evident that the Soviets will take an early initiative in an attempt to conclude a SALT II agreement or, if this does not prove possible, to place themselves in a position where they can claim US responsibility for failure to reach agreement. The forthcoming expiration of the Interim Agreement on Offensive Arms (October 1977) doubtless has stimulated Soviet interest in negotiating a SALT II treaty. They have indicated unofficially that they would not welcome a lengthy extension of the Interim Agreement. In Bucharest on November 24 and in Moscow on November 30, Brezhnev called for a speedy completion of the current round of SALT negotiations within the Vladivostok framework.

We expect that the USSR will test the waters soon with respect to the new administration's position on the major unresolved issues--primarily the Backfire bomber and cruise missiles. They may also take advantage of the President-elect's public proposals, inter alia, to freeze qualitative improvements and his statements questioning the advisability of the US B-1 bomber program by proposing some sort of constraint on the development and deployment of new strategic systems, possibly to include Trident as well as the B-1 and strategic cruise missiles.

[REDACTED]

Unresolved Compliance Issues: Although not discussed in the SALT Standing Consultative Commission (SCC) since May 1976, there are a pair of long-standing compliance issues which are unresolved and which may require high-level attention prior to the next SCC session scheduled to begin on March 21, 1977. This pair of issues, the resolution of which has been linked by the US, involve a US concern with Soviet silo-type launch control facilities which are being constructed in conjunction with deployment of the new Soviet ICBMs, and a Soviet concern about environmental shelters which are being used by the US in conjunction with the Minuteman silo-hardening program.

The specific concerns stated by each side are:

--The US concern regarding the launch control facilities is that they might in the future be converted to ICBM launchers.

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--The stated basis for the Soviet concern is that the use of the current shelters over Minuteman launchers can be classified as the use of deliberate concealment measures within the meaning of the provisions of Article V of the Interim Agreement. They claim that they have received from the US "high-level" assurances that the use of the shelters would be discontinued. The US has denied that any such assurances were given.

At the spring 1976 session of the SCC, the US proposed that both the US and Soviet concerns be resolved simultaneously through an exchange of representatives to visit and examine a III-X-silo and a Minuteman complex.

--This "simultaneous resolution" concept was rejected by the USSR on the basis that the US activity can be considered inconsistent with the deliberate concealment provisions of the Interim Agreement, while launch control facilities are not regulated by the Agreement.

--The Soviets, in rejecting the proposal, also noted that on-site inspection is contrary to the principle of verification by national technical means.

--At the suggestion of the US, these issues were not discussed during the fall 1976 SCC session.

EUROPE

Turkey: The pending US-Turkish defense cooperation agreement could lead to a serious test for US-Turkish relations early in the new administration's tenure.

Congressional rejection of the agreement would almost certainly result in Turkish demands to withdraw US troops from the common defense installations^{25X1}

25X1 [redacted] What additional retaliatory steps the Turks might take are unclear. While most Turks probably see no reasonable alternative to some form of security relationship with the US, nationalism and the political exigencies of the upcoming parliamentary election campaign could force Turkish leaders into a reassessment of the relationship.

Continued delay in Congressional action on the agreement could also lead to tension in Turkish-US relations. Many Turks see the delay as an affront to Turkish national honor, and pressure is building on Prime Minister Demirel to force the issue.^{25X1}

25X1 [redacted] He may even be considering closure of the US facilities if the defense agreement remains unapproved by election time--no later than next October. Demirel is probably reluctant to do any of this, knowing that such tactics could backfire, but here again domestic political pressures could be the deciding factor.

As in the past, the Turks will probably attempt to influence Washington's deliberations on the defense agreement by raising the specter of closer Soviet-Turkish ties. They are unlikely, however, to make any significant moves toward the Soviets unless the pending agreement is rejected. The same can probably be said for the possibility that Ankara might let Turkish Cypriot leader Denktash act on his desire for a unilateral declaration of independence.

FAR EAST

North Korea: Pyongyang is strongly interested in the Carter administration's view of the US troop presence in Korea. In an unusual display of restraint, North Korean media have not yet branded the US election result a "farce," as was the case within days of the 1968 and 1972 elections. Pyongyang may be content to have the US make the first move;

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In order to influence and probe for any policy changes, however, Pyongyang might make a public diplomatic initiative, essentially involving a repackaging of earlier proposals:

--One option would be to propose bilateral talks with the US without conditions or a prescribed agenda to discuss means for reducing tensions in Korea. Since the spring of 1974 the North Koreans, through a series of public statements and resolutions, have attempted to draw the US into bilateral talks on a "peace agreement" to replace the 1953 armistice agreement.

--Alternatively, Pyongyang might announce qualified acceptance of the US concept of four-power talks, perhaps with a proviso that South Korea, China, and possibly additional interested powers should participate only as observers after the ground was initially explored in private US - North Korea talks.

Any North Korean political initiative would be designed to encourage American sentiment for an early removal of US military forces from South Korea. It might be accompanied by efforts to establish direct, private contacts with US officials. Similar rounds of "diplomatic" approaches by North Korean officials occurred in the fall of 1974 and again in the spring of 1975. Although less likely, North Korea might enlist a third country as an intermediary for secret Washington-Pyongyang talks.

We believe it unlikely that Pyongyang would resort to tension-building tactics along the DMZ or elsewhere in Korea at the outset of the Carter administration in advance of any Korean policy review. The Panmunjom incident in August again demonstrated to the North the counterproductive nature of such tactics. Even so, over the years Kim Il-song had demonstrated a flair for abruptly changing course, and he could well assume a tougher stance if he judges that no US troop withdrawal is in the immediate offing.

Vietnam: Hanoi is likely to test the new administration's position on the conditions for allowing Vietnamese entry into the UN and for normalizing bilateral relations.

Although Hanoi has noted Mr. Carter's common stand with President Ford on the MIA issue, the Vietnamese have decided not to press the UN issue further until the new administration is established in office. The Vietnamese could make a gesture--the release of further names, the cordial reception of an American delegation--to display an image of reasonableness without changing their essential negotiating position--reparations for information--until they have a chance to assess the new administration's position and the extent of domestic pressures in the post-election period.

Laos: It is quite possible that the Lao Communist regime will confront the new President with a renewed demand for so-called "reparations"--a term which it uses in lieu of "economic assistance."

To support this demand, the Lao Communists usually quote the 1973 Vientiane agreement which referred to a US Government statement promising that "it will contribute to the healing of the wounds of war and to the post-war reconstruction of the whole of Indochina."

In putting forward that demand, the Lao regime may make some vague promises to search for Americans still missing in action in Laos. Recent statements by a Lao Central Committee member, however, have made it clear that the Lao authorities are not in a position to account for all those missing.

In whatever form the Lao leadership plans to phrase its demands, its approach toward the US will be coordinated with that of the Vietnamese Communists whose influence on Lao foreign policies has been visible in the past year.

WESTERN HEMISPHERE

Panama: We expect Chief of Government Omar Torrijos to be probing the new administration's intentions regarding the canal treaty negotiations almost from the outset. Although Panamanian spokesmen have put a cautiously optimistic face on Carter's victory, they were upset by some of his campaign statements and would have preferred a Ford triumph. Consequently, Torrijos will not only be pressing Panama's vigorous international campaign to make the canal issue a priority US concern, but will be especially sensitive to perceived signals of US intentions. Deepening domestic difficulties--serious economic problems and weakening political support--have persuaded the General that a treaty may be his only long-term solution.

Panama's initial diplomatic campaign is expected to be relatively reasonable--Torrijos would not be surprised by some hiatus in full substantive discussions on outstanding treaty issues. He will be pushing, however, for at least some sign of continued Executive Branch commitment to the 1974 statement of negotiating principles. As time passes, and especially if the domestic situation worsens, Torrijos will be more prone to use isolated confrontation tactics which he believes can effectively dramatize his warnings to the US.

Cuba: There are several areas and situations that the Castro regime might use to test the new US President. In fact, the cancellation--effective April 15, 1977--of the February 1973 hijacking accord between the US and Cuba was almost certainly intended as an early test of the new administration's attitude toward Havana. Prime Minister Castro announced the cancellation on October 15, 1976, but instead of making his action effective immediately (he could have done so based on his claim that the US had not honored the agreement) he announced his intention to let the agreement's cancellation clause run its full six months, thus extending into the next administration.

Dispatching troops to Mozambique, increasing propaganda pressure for Puerto Rican independence, or attempting to threaten US SR-71 reconnaissance flights over Cuba are three other areas the Cubans might use to plumb the intentions of the next administration. The Castro regime will want to see

if the threats about further Cuban military adventures made by high officials of the present administration in the wake of Angola remain valid after January 20. The Cubans will also want to see how sensitive the next administration is on the Puerto Rico issue and will want to force the new administration to review the need for continued violation of Cuban airspace.

LDCs

Certain key LDCs at the Paris Conference on International Economic Cooperation (the CIEC) can be expected to put President Carter's policy toward North-South relations to an early test. These LDCs have made clear that their support of the postponement (until March) of the CIEC Ministerial Review Conference is based on expectations that the new administration will agree to soften the current US/EC position on LDC debt rescheduling and to ask Congress for increased US contributions to the World Bank's "soft" loan facility. Such initiatives, these LDCs maintain, will be essential not only to the continuation of the CIEC, but also to US diplomacy in the UN General Assembly (especially on such issues as Law of the Seas, the International Development Strategy, reform of the GATT, and the regulation of the export of nuclear technology) and throughout the UNCTAD Commodity Consultations (scheduled through mid-1978).

In the absence of the initiatives described above, the evidence now available indicates many of the LDCs that have acted as moderating influences at the CIEC may threaten to reconsider their positions. They are likely to voice skepticism about the US commitment to a North-South dialogue, and at least some of them will seriously consider withdrawal of their behind-the-scenes support for US-proposed compromises at the CIEC and other North-South negotiations.